

# WORKFORCE OBSERVATIONS FOR WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN COUNTIES

MARCH 2003



State of Wisconsin  
Department of Workforce Development

## Unemployment Edges Up in February

The number of unemployed edged up slightly in February in the Eau Claire-Chippewa metropolitan statistical area (MSA) but not enough to increase the unemployment rate. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in the metro area in February was 5.0 percent, unchanged from January. The local rate remains lower than the state seasonally adjusted rate even though the state rate declined to 5.3 percent in February. This is also the twelfth straight month that the Eau Claire metro unemployment rate was lower than the national rate.

The number of unemployed increased slightly from 4,370 in January to 4,400 in February. The relatively small change follows larger than normal increases in the number of unemployed last fall. The current count of unemployed residents is less than one year ago and the current unemployment rate is down from 5.8 percent of last February.

The unemployment rate is the share of the total civilian labor force that is out of work and looking for a job. As the labor force grows larger, primarily from an increase in the number of residents with jobs, the percentage of unemployed in the labor force (unemployment rate) decreases.

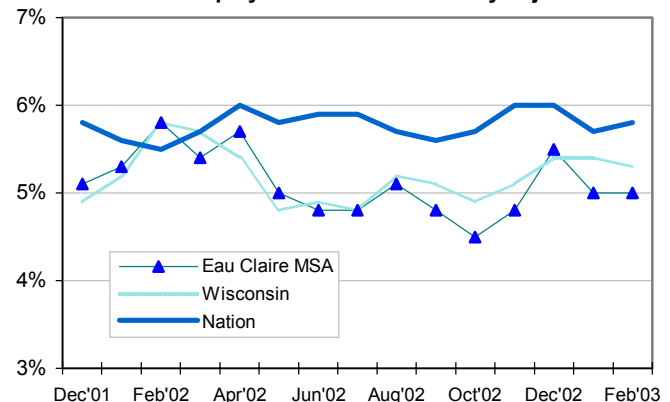
The number of residents with jobs increased in February to 84,100 from 83,100 in January. The increase in employment was especially robust and should be viewed with some caution since employers from most industry sectors were not adding workers during the month. The increase in employment resulted from additional jobs in state and local government, mostly as agencies recalled workers to positions vacated during the holidays. Delayed payroll reporting by government agencies shifts those increases to February rather than in January when they actually occurred. In the metro area employment in state government increased by 2,000 workers in February while local government added 800 workers.

Only three of the state's eleven metropolitan areas re-

ported a rise in unemployment rate in February. For the most part, unemployment rates either declined (in four) or were unchanged (in three). The highest unemployment rate among the MSAs was in Racine with 7.5 percent unemployed while the lowest was in Madison with 2.5 percent unemployed.

Not seasonally adjusted the Eau Claire County unemployment rate was among only five of the state's 72 counties that reported a decline in February. Unemployment rates increased in each of the other counties in West Central Wisconsin. The largest increase in the region, and third largest in the state, was in Barron County where the unemployment rate rose from 8.1 percent in January to 9.3 percent in February. There were over 1,300 claims filed by Barron County residents for unemployment compensation benefits in mid-February, many of them from workers laid off from production jobs.

Unemployment Rates-Seasonally adjusted



	Dec'01	Jan'02	Feb'02	Dec'02	Jan'03	Feb'03
Eau Claire MSA	5.1%	5.3%	5.8%	5.5%	5.0%	5.0%
Wisconsin	4.9%	5.2%	5.8%	5.4%	5.4%	5.3%
Nation	5.8%	5.6%	5.5%	6.0%	5.7%	5.8%

## Civilian Labor Force Estimates, not seasonally adjusted, for West Central Wisconsin counties

	Barron			Chippewa			Clark			Dunn			Eau Claire Co.		
	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02
Civilian labor force	25,279	24,859	24,473	32,998	31,884	32,205	15,944	16,029	15,931	23,519	23,476	21,922	55,372	53,598	53,637
Employed	22,924	22,838	22,399	30,114	29,135	28,951	14,283	14,484	14,124	21,936	22,058	20,330	52,534	50,828	50,506
Unemployed	2,355	2,021	2,074	2,884	2,749	3,254	1,661	1,545	1,807	1,583	1,418	1,592	2,838	2,770	3,131
% unemployed	9.3	8.1	8.5	8.7	8.6	10.1	10.4	9.6	11.3	6.7	6.0	7.3	5.1	5.2	5.8
	Pepin			Pierce			Polk			St. Croix			West Central region		
	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02
Civilian labor force	3,243	3,242	3,247	21,798	21,769	21,376	24,461	24,309	23,785	38,740	38,526	37,898	241,354	237,692	234,474
Employed	2,968	2,989	2,893	20,352	20,355	19,972	22,119	22,071	21,355	35,280	35,284	34,621	222,510	220,042	215,151
Unemployed	275	253	354	1,446	1,414	1,404	2,342	2,238	2,430	3,460	3,242	3,277	18,844	17,650	19,323
% unemployed	8.5	7.8	10.9	6.6	6.5	6.6	9.6	9.2	10.2	8.9	8.4	8.6	7.8	7.4	8.2

## Industry Employment Estimate: Current month - February 2003

(Employment in thousands)	Barron			Clark			Dunn			Pepin		
	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02
Total Nonfarm	21.4	21.2	21.1	9.7	9.7	9.5	15.7	15.8	14.7	2.2	2.2	2.1
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.2	0.1
Manufacturing	6.3	6.3	6.4	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.1	2.2	2.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Trade	3.4	3.4	3.6	1.4	1.4	1.4	2.4	2.4	2.3	0.4	0.5	0.5
Transportation & Utilities	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	1.7	1.7	1.7	0.1	0.0	0.1
Financial Activities	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.1
Education & Health Services	2.3	2.2	2.2	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Leisure & Hospitality	1.7	1.6	1.6	0.7	0.7	0.6	1.5	1.4	1.5	0.2	0.2	0.1
Info/Prof. & Bus.Serv./Other	1.6	1.6	1.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	1.3	1.2	1.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Total Government	4.8	4.7	4.5	2.1	2.1	2.1	4.5	4.7	3.7	0.6	0.6	0.6

	Pierce			Polk			St. Croix			Eau Claire MSA		
	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02
Total Nonfarm	10.4	10.3	9.6	14.8	14.7	14.5	26.0	26.0	25.7	77.0	74.2	75.2
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.6	1.3	1.4	1.2	2.5	2.6	2.3
Manufacturing	0.8	0.8	0.8	3.7	3.8	3.8	5.6	5.6	5.9	11.1	11.2	11.1
Trade	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.9	2.0	2.0	4.2	4.2	4.2	12.6	12.6	12.6
Transportation & Utilities	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.9	0.9	0.9	2.8	2.8	2.6
Financial Activities	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.5	1.0	1.0	0.9	3.7	3.7	3.7
Education & Health Services	1.1	1.1	1.0	2.0	2.0	1.9	2.8	2.8	2.8	12.3	12.2	11.9
Leisure & Hospitality	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.4	1.3	1.3	3.1	3.0	2.8	7.0	7.0	6.9
Information/Prof. & Bus.Serv.	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.3	3.4	3.4	3.3	7.8	7.7	7.6
Other Services	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3.7	3.7	3.7
Total Government	3.8	3.8	3.1	2.8	2.7	2.6	3.7	3.7	3.6	13.5	10.7	12.8

Current month preliminary. Estimates based on March 2002 benchmark. Summing from unrounded numbers.

Two of every three claims filed for unemployment benefits by residents of West Central Wisconsin were by workers from either manufacturing or construction. Those claims do begin to decline by mid-March.

The number of unemployed in the West Central region

### Assistance sought from multi - location employers

Employers with operations in multiple locations (worksites) in Wisconsin who do not report the number of workers at each location are requested to complete a Multiple Worksite Report (MWR), PLEASE. The MWR are sent to employers during the first quarter by the **Bureau of Workforce Information** and supplement the data that employers provide on the Unemployment Insurance Quarterly Contribution Report.

Similar to the unemployment report, the employment and wage data collected in this survey is confidential and used only for statistical and analytical studies, Unemployment Insurance Program purposes, and the Dislocated Worker Program. Employers benefit because data (like that in the above table) can be used to assist business planners with new sites location, economic forecasting, and wage analysis.

For more information, or assistance on the MWR, contact **Deborah Holt at 608.266.5321**

climbed to 18,800 in February and the unemployment rate rose from 7.4 percent in January to 7.8 percent in February. In spite of the increase the current rate is lower than the 8.7 percent unemployed one year ago.

Only eight counties in the state reported higher unemployment rates than last February and two of those counties, Barron and St. Croix, were from the West Central region. The unemployment rate in St. Croix County in February was 8.9 percent, up from 8.6 in February 2002. Not only are workers in St. Croix County laid off from employers located in the county, but also from employers in Minnesota. As in most of the state most of these workers are laid off from manufacturers and construction firms.

Every county in the region, except Pierce, reported a reduction in manufacturing jobs from January to February, and all have fewer production jobs this year than twelve months ago. Some of those reductions are permanent as production operations have closed, some are seasonal and workers will return to work in the next few weeks, and still others are indefinite and workers and employers are waiting for improvements in the national economy.

The number of jobs in trade is also down in many counties of the region, but employment in leisure and hospitality (which now includes restaurant and bar jobs) is a bit higher than one year ago. The loss of retail trade jobs is not typical in February and could reflect the lack of snow, but more likely reflects the lack of consumer confidence.

**Look for the most current Labor Market Information at: [WWW.DWD.STATE.WI.US/LMI](http://WWW.DWD.STATE.WI.US/LMI)**

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